

Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative

Notes from Community Discussion Groups

July 7, 2009

Three Community Conversation groups were held at the Inspiring Hope, Making Change Youth Violence Prevention Summit, which occurred in Seattle on July 7, 2009. What follows summarizes the ideas and suggestions that were generated by these discussions. These notes are being used in planning discussions and other community meetings held by the Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative partners.

What would you like to contribute to the success of the initiative or goal of reducing youth violence?

Volunteerism and Parent Involvement

- Need volunteers – especially people of color (Latino / African American)
- People can volunteer no matter how they “look/talk”
- There needs to be more inclusiveness; this is about people
 - Involve parents in youth efforts/initiatives
 - Include all languages, cultures, socio-economic groups
- Have more parent involvement at youth events
- Create mentor relationships
- Put self in others shoes (see both sides)

Youth Involvement, Outreach, Communications

- Youth can offer less formal more personal outreach based on relationships
- Work on our outreach efforts
 - Use outreach leaders that have credibility in the community
 - There is respect for familiar individuals/leaders
 - Need more grassroots outreach efforts; use popular school teachers, coaches, etc.
- Involve youth in the communication committee; invite youth to create and maintain an online social networking page
 - Where youth activities are highlighted & advertised
 - Keep the page current and up to date
- We need more community building in our neighborhoods; do block parties/barbeques; neighbors don’t know each other so they don’t trust each other
- We should use drama/role-play at community events to teach people about the issues we are facing
- Offer positive campaigns to encourage youth; talk about the positive possibilities (e.g college)
- Do better advertising for youth events
 - Radio, other media (Facebook/Myspace) make a page for Youth events/programs
- Our media needs to be more honest and transparent
- Think about the materials put out to attract youth; make it a eye-catching

Youth Support

- Consider the social conditions and rivalries between different youth groups/ schools before hosting joint events
- Need to be follow-up on youth efforts; check-in to see the progress

- Check-in on youth to ensure their positive progress; don't focus on summer programs only; need school year programs

What do you think is the biggest challenge facing the initiative? Facing youth? Facing the community as it reaches out to youth?

Safety and Transportation

- Personal safety (CD/Southend)
- "Late night" doesn't feel safe because anyone can come into the community center
 - Many don't have reliable and safe transportation late at night
 - Youth need incentives to participate in city programs like "late night" (e.g FOOD!)
 - Do events like barbeques and block parties
- Transportation is an issue in getting youth to events and programs

Type of Programming and Scheduling

- Create more weekend programs with a more social focus
- Make events more interesting; resource fairs need more than pamphlets
- Initiative should involve mentorship
- Invest in existing mental health organizations, add capacity
- Each Network taking own approach
- Case management model should be consistent across the Initiative
- Facilities can open their doors to these programs
- Our approach to youth has to change...focused on relationship building; it takes time to make an effect on youth
- Take chances on good ideas
- Follow-through/consistency
 - How to handle "wrap around" case issues
 - Resources
- Jobs – teach skills
- Solutions and issues need to be fully addressed
- What are underlying issues – case management, resource books, where to turn

Communications

- Marketing what we're doing – How does the community know?
- Not enough people know about the Initiative; keep everyone aware of what's going on
- Communicate/message/brand the Initiative for all to hear about it and know what's going on; use technology

Community Involvement

- Rules in regards to contacts/ mentors (w/criminal charges [criminalization] felony)
 - How to balance experience/background of young adults
- Value former gang members' contribution; youth will listen to them
- Getting men to volunteer (70% of volunteers are women)
- Need a culturally relevant Initiative
- Input of multiple "experts;" police need to have a voice, bring their "street" experience
- Seattle Schools need to be part of the solution
- Need more mental health professionals on board, especially those who are culturally competent
- Need to build more trust between the government/organizations and the community

- Government/organizations should build partnerships with existing community groups
- Use youth as ambassadors/outreach workers
- Use 8 million dollars wisely/efficiently

Parent and Family Involvement

- Parents may be unable to participate because they are working
- Create space for siblings and other family members to participate
- Need to hear more from parents and families; ask them what they want, how they want to be involved/ what is needed
- The Initiative needs parental/family buy-in by reducing the pressures on parents/families; reduce their anxiety (life pressures and anxieties); provide food & job/resource opportunities
- Increase language capacity in the Initiative so that families whose home language is different from English can participate
- No natural connection exists within the Initiative to involve parents/families – the focus is all on youth
- Create opportunities for linkages for parents/families to be involved (i.e. mental health model uses intake and assessment as one way)
- In addition to working with at-risk youth, we have to work with their PARENTS

Youth Involvement

- Listening to the youth; engaging the youth in discussion and dialogue
- Initiative needs to challenge youth; create meaningful and engaging opportunities for youth
- In order to work with youth, we need to know what they want
- Keep youth involved in the Initiative
- Need to make sure Initiative effectively reaches affected youth.
- Need more youth-led programs in the city
- Get to work – “walk the walk”- too much talk - get to action
- Stereotypes – perceptions need to be real to reach youth

What possible collaborations/partnerships exist or are on the horizon?

- Share aggressive connecting communication across organizations/demographics (table top exercises)
- At intake/referral connect youth with resources (schools/CBO/municipal worker) – case management/referral services
- Some organizations have the ability to offer services/training for criminalized populations – offer training
- Training – experts – recruiting
- Knowledgeable staff and volunteers (know resources)
- www.beehive.org / www.ziproad.org
- Coalition of West Seattle Human Service Providers
- District Councils
- Gathering of Neighbors Organizations to bring into the Initiative
 - CASA, Family Preservation, Youth Care, Father organizations (DADS); Community Sports Leagues, Youth Arts organizations, more grassroots organizations

What will impede the development of successful partnerships?

- Professional gangbanging – organizations not getting along/working together because of historical issues
- Allowing politics and ego to get in the way
- Not implementing what has worked in other areas or in the past
- Lack of follow-through; lack of action; working “under-cover”

What makes partnerships/collaborations successful?

- Multiple ways to connect – develop a website with a community calendar and other information
- Recurring forums for those involved or interested to talk with each other
- Intentional trust-building activities

What additional ideas or suggestions do you have?

- City needs to look at policies and procedures that are barriers to young people (with records, or who lack work history or formal education) obtaining more than jobs...create career pathways; look at contracting
- Have youth summits in the evening/weekends
- Have youth-led booths at festivals (Like Torchlight and The Bite of Seattle)
- There should be more awareness about the violence that occurs in South Seattle
- The Initiative could find a reporter to cover progress of the initiative
 - Profile community members
- Promote principles of Dr.King
 - Steps to defuse conflict
 - Publicize these
 - Youth can help distribute and share with their peers
- Work from the heart, not the wallet
- Move ego and pride out of the way
- We are all affected by youth violence directly or indirectly

Other issues identified for future consideration

- School district - not alternative schools, but “preventative” schools
- Use existing municipal resources
- Pay youth for alternatives
- Alternatives to incarceration
- Relationships – disconnect racial tension; institutionalized racism
- Change paradigm mindset of young people
- Inadequate school systems
- Understanding privilege